



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

July 3, 2003

The Honorable Gerald M. Zachios
Foreign Minister
Government of the Republic of the
Marshall Islands
P.O. Box 1349
Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960

Dear Minister Zachios:

We regret that you decided not to attend this year's U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)/Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) annual meeting held in San Francisco, California, June 3-5, 2003.

It is also unfortunate that you missed our visit to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to observe firsthand the results of our Marshall Islands science work. I do hope you will be able to do so in the future. In any event, I believe Ms. Kristina Stege capably represented you and the interests of your Government at the annual meeting.

I do not share the concern expressed to me in your June 2, 2003, letter that the same issues reappear from year to year on the agendas for DOE/RMI annual meetings. To the contrary, revisiting the medical and environmental programs each year allows us collectively to assess the progress made and to consider and plan improvements designed to ensure that we serve the needs of the program recipients in accordance with DOE's statutory mandate from the U.S. Congress.

In this regard, I believe DOE has been very responsive to the issues and concerns of the RMI Government and the local atoll governments with respect to matters within DOE's congressional mandate. As reported and discussed at the recent annual meeting in San Francisco, we have made significant progress in a number of the following areas: (1) improved and expanded delivery of medical care to the entire DOE patient population; and (2) fulfillment of our undertakings in the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the Rongelap, Enewetak, and Utrök communities, including the construction and erection of the Enewetak Radiological Laboratory, the development and use of a whole body counting (WBC) facility at Rongelap, installation of WBC capability at Majuro, and in situ WBC at Enewetak, Rongelap, and soon at Majuro, as well as in situ bioassay work at Enewetak and Rongelap. We expect that these matters, centrally related to DOE's special health care and radiological environmental assessment monitoring in support of local community resettlement efforts, will continue to be the subjects of future DOE/RMI annual meetings.

We are also pleased to have helped foster the creation of the DOE/RMI Working Group that has now met three times and opened a meaningful dialogue between us. It provides a helpful forum for DOE, the RMI Government, and the atoll governments, to discuss our current program and its future direction.

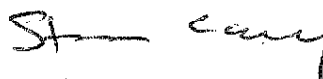


The matter of the Runit Dome issue, which you expressed concern in your June 2 letter, is not a DOE responsibility. As you are aware, as part of the tripartite MOU among DOE, the RMI Government, and the Enewetak community, LLNL has conducted environmental sampling in the Fig/Quince area of Runit Island. Stewardship of the Dome itself, however, is a bilateral, intergovernmental matter between the RMI Government and our State Department; it is beyond the purview of DOE's radiological health and environmental assessment mandate.

I support the proposal as presented at the San Francisco meeting for more informal contacts between Working Group members. Indeed, I felt these recent meetings were worthwhile, and I believe we made advances in several areas, as the informal Record of Discussion will show. I hope you will participate in these informal exchanges, as well as in the DOE/RMI annual meetings in years to come.

I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Sincerely,



Steven V. Cary
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Health Studies

cc: His Excellency Banny de Brum
Ambassador of the Republic
of the Marshall Islands